

LIFE OF THE HOLY MARTYR LUCIA



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ner. The officers were not able to carry Lucia off to a place of evil as they had been commanded, for she was rendered immovable by the power of God. Great force was employed, but Lucia could not be budged, and she continued steadfast in faith, praising Christ our true God.

Finally the proconsul, seething with rage, commanded that the saint be set afire where she stood, but boiling oil and pitch had no power to hurt her. Not knowing what to do, and beside himself with fury, for this wonder indeed strengthened the Christians in their faith and was a great sign to the unbelievers, Paschasius gave order that she be beheaded on the spot, and by this means the holy virgin Lucia received the crown of martyrdom.

In some accounts of this martyrdom a very unusual occurrence is related. The proconsul Paschasius was, it is said, not only an impious persecutor of the Christians, but also a greedy and dishonest ruler; and it so happened that, at the very moment after he had pronounced sentence for the martyr to be beheaded, envoys from Rome arrived to arrest Paschasius and take him to Rome as a prisoner to stand trial before the Senate, for the authorities had learned that he was guilty of innumerable thieveries throughout the province.

This caused a delay at the point where the virgin martyr was about to receive her crown, and so she was able through the grace of Christ to partake of the precious and all-holy Body and Blood of the Master from the hands of a pious and courageous priest, who with great boldness approached the place of contest.

*Through the prayers of Thy holy virgin martyr
Lucia, O Christ our God, preserve us in the
Orthodox Faith and heal the infirmity of our souls
and bodies.*

AMEN.

The Life and Martyrdom of SAINT LUCIA

December 13

304 A.D.

During the time that the last pagan Roman persecution was vexing the Church, there dwelt in Syracuse a pious widow, named Eutychia, who, having long lost her earthly husband, fixed all her hopes and desires on the love of the heavenly Bridegroom, and the possession of that country where they neither marry, nor are given in marriage. She had one daughter, named Lucia, and rightly so named; in that she was to follow her Blessed Lord in being a light to lighten that nation which was her native land. At a very early age she renounced the intention of marriage, and resolved entirely to dedicate herself to God. This vow, however, she concealed from her mother; and thereby became exposed to the importunities of a nobleman of Syracuse who sought her to be his bride, and who, though a Pagan, found favor in the eyes of Eutychia.

In process of time Eutychia fell into a sore disease, suffering from an incurable issue of blood, and for four years she struggled against it. Like her in the Gospel, she spent her wealth upon many physicians, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. It once happened that Lucia and her mother, during the celebration of the Holy Liturgy, heard for the Gospel this very history-and the Saint, filled with the spirit of faith, took comfort. "Be of good cheer," she said, "and believe that the intercessions of the faithful servants of the Lord, who, having suffered for His Name now stand in His sight, avail much. Let us arise, and go to the tomb of St Agatha: it may be that by her means we shall receive the benefit that we seek, even the restoration of your health."

So they arose, and came to Catania. And at the tomb of St Agatha the holy virgin, Eutychia and her daughter were constant in supplication, till wearied out by bodily and mental fatigue, the virgin slept. And while she slept, she had a glorious vision. Lucia beheld St Agatha in the company of the blessed, and heard from her lips that Eutychia was made whole of the disease. And, even so, on waking, she found it to be. "And now, my mother," said the Christian maiden, "speak to me no more, I beseech you, of marriage. The servitude that should have been mine, had I been given to man, the corrupter of nature, let it also be mine when I give myself to Christ, the Restorer of me and of all things."

Eutychia, not unmindful of the benefit she had received, complied with her more earnest-minded daughter's request. Farms and estates were valued for sale; notice was given to the tenant farmers that their rents in kind and of money were to be paid to others. The fine herds of Sicilian oxen, and valuable flocks of sheep waiting to be sheared, all were put up by Dolabella the auctioneer; the house plate, the ornaments, the necklaces, bracelets, and earrings, the embroidered fabrics and precious silks, all were turned into money; and daily out of their proceeds were the hungry fed, and the naked clothed, and the homeless lodged.

Tidings of these things were soon brought to the ears of the nobleman by whom Lucia was sought; and, full of indignation, not only at the intention of his destined bride(which was by this time no secret), but at the loss of the broad lands and hoarded treasures that he had hoped to enjoy, he went to the proconsul Paschasius. "The august emperors," he said, "are crushing the accursed sect of the Nazarenes from Persia to the pillars of Hercules; everywhere legates and praetors, and officers, civil and military, are in arms against it. Sicily only, the first province that Rome possessed, is the last that these Christians pollute. Lucia, the richest maiden of Syracuse, is dissipating the possessions of her ancestors among the wretched and vile; Lucia, my promised bride, dares to call herself the Bride of the Crucified."

Then was the anger of Paschasius kindled; and he commanded the virgin to do sacrifice to the demons. "I have sacrificed already all that I had," replied Lucia, "to my Lord and God; and now, since I have nothing more that I can devote to Him, I desire to sacrifice myself to His Name. Do that which you think to be advantageous to you; I will do that which I know to be profitable to my salvation."

"You have bestowed your goods on your lovers," returned the prefect, "you, a high-born maiden, have squandered them in infamy."

"I know," replied Lucia, "corruption neither of mind nor of body; corrupters I have ever kept from me."

"And who are these *corrupters*?" demanded Paschasius.

"Such as yourself," replied the maiden; "for it is written, *Evil communications corrupt good manners.*"

"Words are well," answered the proconsul, "till we come to strokes."

"Till, and after," answered Lucia, "the words of God can never cease."

"And do you call yourself God?"

"I am the handmaiden of God," said Christ's confessor, "and therefore have spoken the words of God, since it is written, *It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit That speaketh in you.*"

Then said Paschasius, "Do you claim to have this Holy Spirit within you?"

Lucia answered, "He who lives chastely is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

"Then I shall send you to a house of ill repute," said the Proconsul, "and there your body will be defiled and you will lose your Holy Spirit."

But the holy maiden, trusting in the might of Christ her immortal Bridegroom, was not moved to fear even by this horrible threat. Indeed, her chastity was guarded in a most wondrous man-